

MYSTERY

MYSTERIES

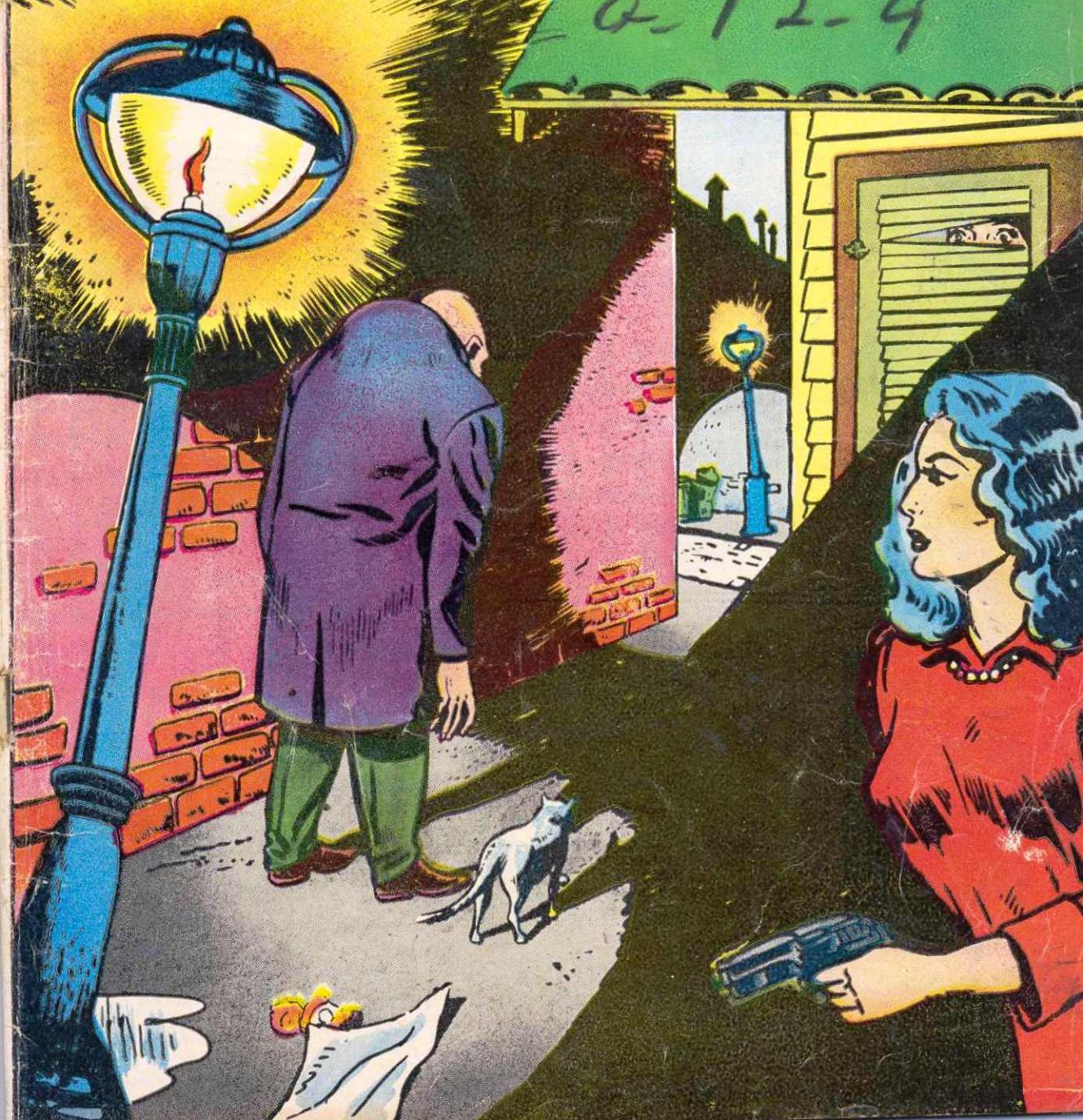
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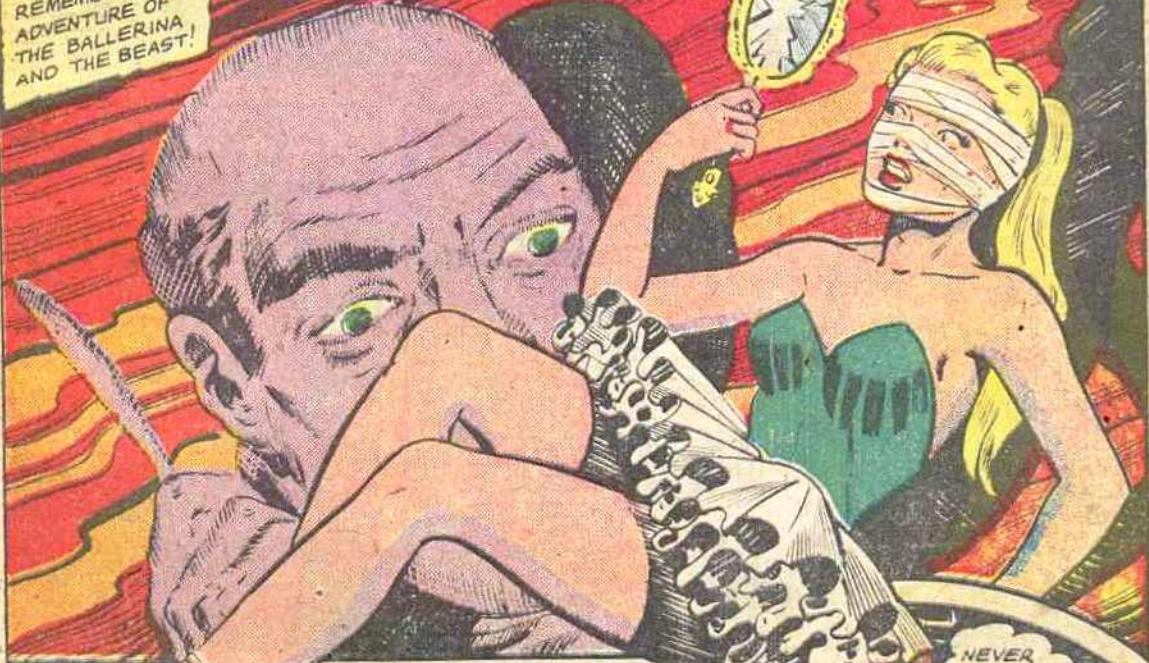
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MYSTERIES, January, 1955, No. 11. Published bi-monthly by Randall Publishers Limited, 2382 Dundas Street West, Toronto 9, Ontario, Canada. Authorized as second-class matter June 29th, 1953, by the Post Office, Buffalo, N.Y., under the Act of March 3rd, 1879. Authorized as second-class matter at the Post Office Department at Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Subscription in the U.S.A. and Canada: 10 issues for \$1.00, single copies 10 cents. All names in this periodical are entirely fictitious and no identification with actual persons is intended.

Printed in Canada.

The BROKEN MIRROR

HER DANCE WAS A VISION OF BEAUTY, BUT ITS REFLECTION WAS A NIGHTMARE OF STARK MADNESS! YOU WILL LONG REMEMBER THE ADVENTURE OF THE BALLERINA AND THE BEAST!



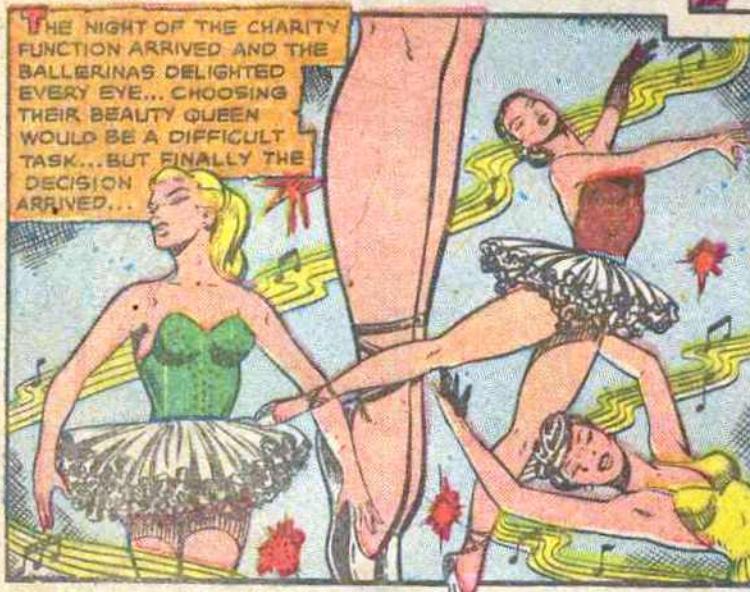
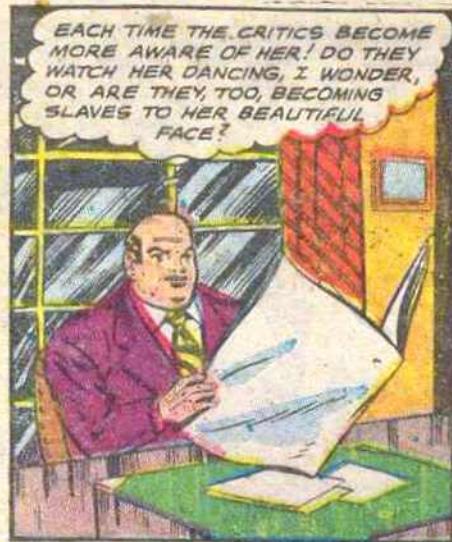
Each night as Glenda West graced the stage with her flawless rhythm, the brooding eyes of a famous surgeon dwelled in strange rapture...

And after each performance, he lingered in the shadows near the stage door...

NEVER EVEN A GLANCE IN MY DIRECTION! SOMEDAY, MY DEAR, OUR RELATIONSHIP WILL BE DIFFERENT...



THE DAY WHEN
GLEND A WEST
WAS TO MEET
THE MAN WHO
WOULD CHANGE
THE WHOLE
PATTERN OF
HER LIFE WAS
NOT FAR AWAY...
DOCTOR HILL
WAS A NOTED
PLASTIC SURGEON,
BUT HIS SPARE
TIME WAS SPENT
READING, NOT
MEDICAL
BOOKS, BUT
THE REVIEWS
ON GLEND A'S
LATEST
SHOWS...

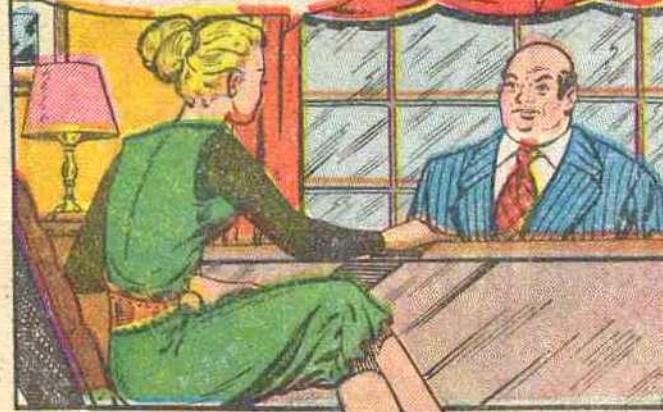


THE DOCTOR HAD APPLIED A WILD GAMBLE ON HIS DECISION THE NIGHT THE BALLERINA QUEEN WAS CHOSEN... BUT HE WON... WITH TREMBLING HEART HE LISTENED TO HIS PLOT BEING FULFILLED...



I KNOW IT DOESN'T SEEM NICE, BUT I MANAGED TO FIND OUT **YOU** WERE THE ONE WHO OUT-VOTED ME, DOCTOR. I'M NOT VAIN, BUT I THINK THIS WILL AFFECT MY CAREER...

I REALIZE IT MUST HAVE BEEN A BLOW TO YOU, MY DEAR. BUT IT WAS THE TRUTH.



NATURALLY I DIDN'T MEAN TO AFFECT YOUR CAREER, BUT THE TRUTH IS YOU DO HAVE A SERIOUS CHIN MALFORMATION! I'M SURPRISED YOU WERE NEVER AWARE OF HOW MUCH IT SHOWS UP FROM THE STAGE!



IT DOES! YOU MEAN ENOUGH TO DISTRACT FROM MY DANCING? COULD YOU HELP ME, DOCTOR?

IF YOU WISH, CALL ME IN A FEW DAYS AND I'LL MAKE PREPARATIONS TO CONSIDER YOUR CASE...



A STAGE WAS SET FOR GLENDA-WEST THAT WAS AS MACABRE AS ANY PERFORMER WAS TO GRACE...

SO WE FINALLY MEET, GLENDA! AND WE SHALL SEE A GREAT DEAL OF EACH OTHER FROM NOW ON... MORE THAN YOU COULD EVER DREAM OF!

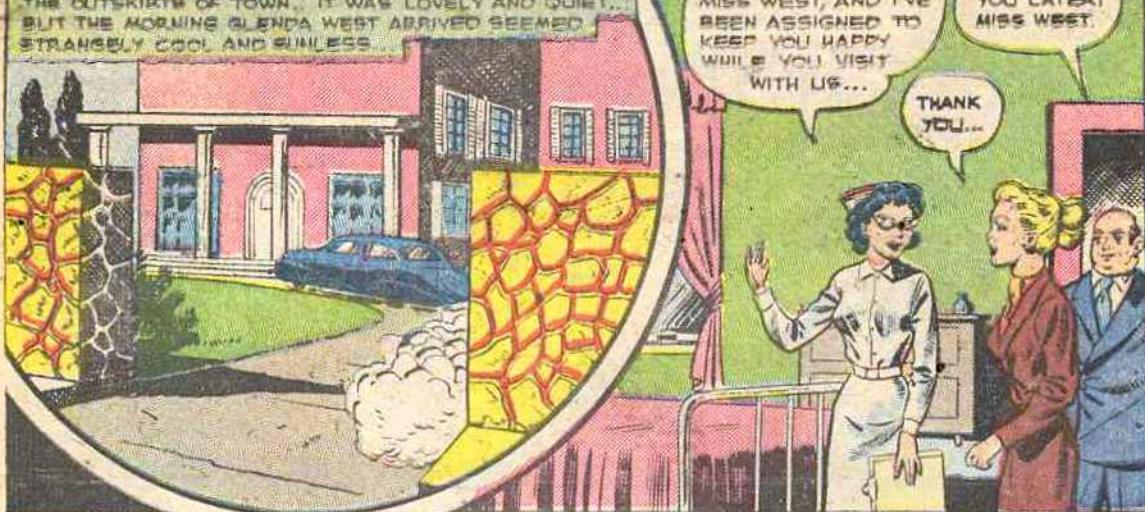


DOCTOR HILL'S PRIVATE HOSPITAL WAS LOCATED ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF TOWN. IT WAS LOVELY AND QUIET, BUT THE MORNING GLENDA WEST ARRIVED SEEMED STRANGELY COOL AND SUNLESS.

THIS IS YOUR ROOM, MISS WEST, AND I'VE BEEN ASSIGNED TO KEEP YOU HAPPY WHILE YOU VISIT WITH US...

I'LL SEE YOU LATER, MISS WEST.

THANK YOU...



NO MIRRORS! STRANGE...HOW COME?

THE DOCTOR WANTS YOU TO FORGET YOUR OLD FACE... IT'LL HELP YOU TO BE PLEASED WITH YOUR NEW ONE AFTER YOUR OPERATION!

OH, GOOD AFTERNOON! YOU MUST BE DOCTOR GREY WHOM THE SURGEON SPOKE OF! I'M JUST KEEPING UP WITH MY DIARY...

I AM. AND WELCOME! I'LL BE WITH YOU DURING YOUR OPERATION...



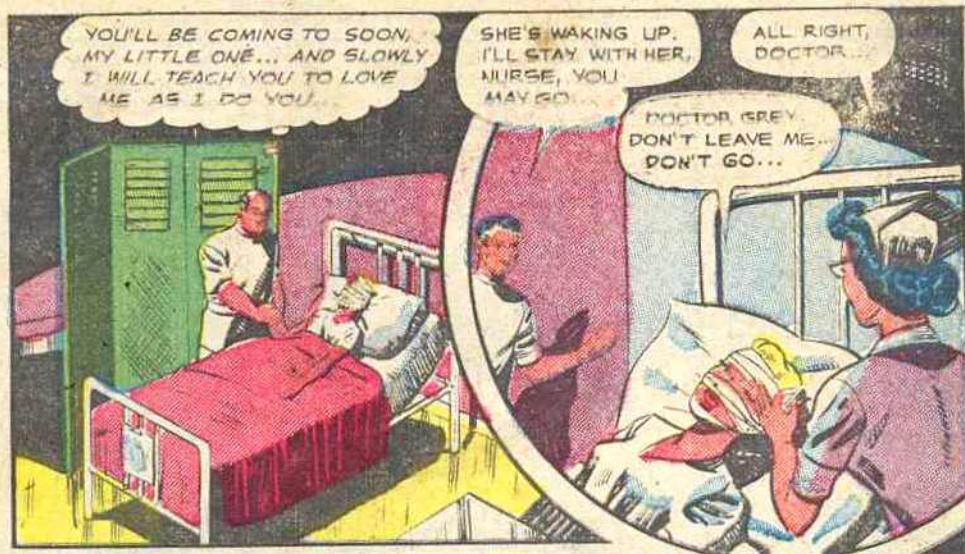
NOW DON'T YOU WORRY ABOUT A THING, DEAR...

I'LL CONFESS I WAS WORRIED... BUT SOMEHOW DOCTOR GREY MADE ME FEEL BETTER...

THIS WILL BE COMPLETELY PAINLESS, MY DEAR. YOU RELAX AND WE'LL HAVE YOU ASLEEP IN NO TIME...



TIME CEASED
TO MATTER...
THE PAIN
BENEATH HER
BANDAGED
FACE CAME
AND WENT...
SURGEON HILL
GAVE HIS
PATIENT VERY
ATTENTION...
FOR NOW
SHE WAS
MORE THAN
HIS IDOL...
SHE WAS
HIS VICTIM!



IT'S ALL RIGHT,
GLEND A... YOU'RE
COMING OUT OF
THE ANESTHESIA...
DON'T BE
FRIGHTENED...

BUT I AM! I'M
FRIGHTENED OF
SOMETHING...
SOMETHING!

SO MY LITTLE
PATIENT IS
AWAKE! FINE...
YES, DOCTOR... WHY
DID YOU SEND
DOCTOR GREY
AWAY? LET SOME-
ONE STAY WITH ME...
YOU STAY... I'M
AFRAID TO BE
ALONE JUST
NOW...

DAYS PASSED IN
DRONING MONOTONY...
DOCTOR HILL WAS
LAVISH IN ATTENTION,
AND IN A HIGHLY
PROFESSIONAL
MANNER, SO WAS
DOCTOR GREY...

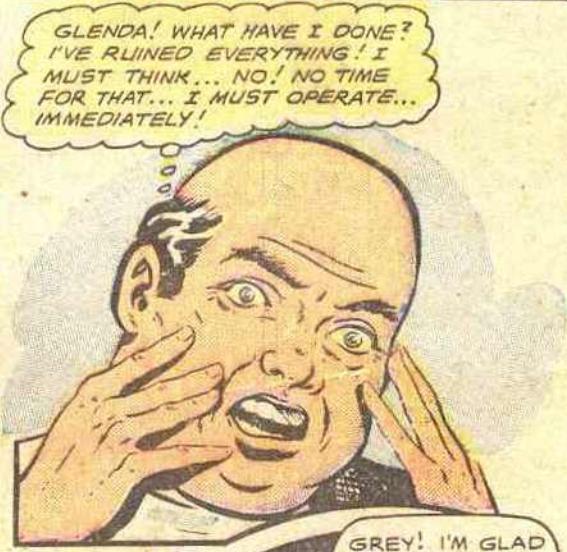
WHAT WOULD I DO WITHOUT
MY DIARY FOR COMFORT? I
FEEL SO DIFFERENT LATELY...
BUT I KNOW WHY... I'VE FALLEN
IN LOVE... YES,
I LOVE MY
DOCTOR.
IT'S TRUE...

HELLO, DOCTOR...
I WAS JUST THINKING
ABOUT YOU... I OWE
YOU SO MUCH...

WELL, YOU
SOUND
CHEERFUL
TODAY, MY
DEAR!



DOCTOR HILL CAUGHT THE SOFTNESS IN GLENDA'S VOICE AND SAW THE SMILE BEHIND HER BANDAGED FACE... BUT ALSO HE SAW HER SMALL HAND DROP TO COVER THE PAGE SHE HAD BEEN SO BUSILY WRITING...



HERE WAS NO MISTAKING THE COLD FIERCENESS OF YOUNG DOCTOR GREY'S TONE AS HE MOVED TOWARD THE SURGEON THREATENINGLY.

WHAT SORT OF BUSINESS ARE YOU COOKING UP NOW? THAT GIRL DOESN'T NEED ANOTHER OPERATION AND YOU KNOW IT!

DON'T TOUCH ME, GREY! I TELL YOU I KNOW WHAT I'M DOING! SHE **MUST** HAVE THIS OPERATION!

IF YOU WON'T ASSIST ME, DON'T INTERFERE, OR I'LL KILL YOU! I LOVE GLENDA AND I'VE RUINED HER FACE... BUT THERE'S STILL TIME TO REMEDY THAT... SHE'LL NEVER KNOW...



BUT THEIR RAISED VOICES BROUGHT FORTH A CURIOUS EAVESDROPPER... GLENDA WEST HEARD HER NAME MENTIONED, AND...

RUINED MY FACE! WHAT DOES HE MEAN?

YOU COULD GET LIFE FOR THIS, YOU FIEND!

I WANT LIFE... LIFE WITH HER! AND I'LL HAVE IT AT ANY COST!



NURSE, WHAT'S WRONG IN THERE? WHAT ARE THEY SAYING?

BACK TO YOUR ROOM, YOUNG LADY! THIS MINUTE!



AFTER RETURNING TO HER QUARTERS, GLENDA SUDDENLY REALIZED THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ALL SHE HAD OVERHEARD... THE MIRROR FELL FROM HER HAND... AND FOR AN INSTANT SHE SANK TO THE FLOOR WEAK WITH HORROR...

WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO ME? WHAT HAVE THEY DONE? I MUST THINK... THINK...



MISS WEST! WHERE ARE YOU GOING? COME BACK HERE! YOU CAN'T RUN OFF LIKE THAT! STOP HER, SOMEONE!



THE CLATTER OF GLENDA'S RACING HEELS AND THE SCREAMS OF THE NURSES SENT A STARTLING MESSAGE TO DOCTOR GREY... HE SPRANG INTO SUDDEN ACTION...

BLAST YOU, HILL, THIS IS ALL I HAVE TIME FOR NOW! JUST ENOUGH TO PUT YOU OUT OF THE WAY FOR THE MOMENT!

DON'T, YOU FOOL... OHHH...

WHERE DID SHE GOT? DID SOMEONE STOP HER?

NO, DOCTOR! SHE RAN LIKE A DEER! WHAT SHALL WE DO?



KEEP AWAY FROM ME! YOU'LL CRASH!

DON'T BE A LITTLE FOOL, GLENDA! I'M GOING TO CUT YOU OFF! SLOW DOWN... I'M HEADING DIRECTLY IN FRONT OF YOU! I'M... WARNING YOU...

THAT'S BETTER! NOW I'VE GOT SOMETHING TO TELL YOU...

GO AWAY... I DON'T WANT TO TALK TO ANYONE... D-DON'T LOOK AT ME...



PLEASE,
DOCTOR
GREY...
W-WHAT
ARE YOU
DOING?

TAKING YOU RIGHT BACK
TO THE HOSPITAL! YOU
CAN'T TRAVEL AROUND
LIKE THAT...

YOU'RE GOING TO
LET HIM OPERATE
AGAIN! WHAT'S THE
USE... I WANT
TO DIE...

I'M GOING TO
CHANGE YOUR
MIND FOR YOU...
ABOUT EVERY-
THING!

FRIGHTENED
AND
WEAKENED
INTO
SUBMISSION,
GLENDA WEST
NO LONGER
FOUGHT
AGAINST THE
FATE THAT
AWAITED
HER... SOON
SHE WAS IN
HER ROOM
AGAIN
LISTENING IN
PANIC TO THE
PROFESSIONAL
VOICES
OVER HER...

WE'RE REMOVING
THESE BANDAGES
AS SCHEDULED,
NURSE! RIGHT
NOW!

YES, DOCTOR, I
THINK SHE'S
CALMER NOW...

DON'T TURN YOUR
FACE FROM ME,
GLENDA! I INTEND
LOOKING AT IT
FOREVER!

HERE! TAKE A
LOOK! AND NO
MORE BROKEN
MIRRORS,
PLEASE!

I—I'M
AFRAID...

IT'S JUST THE SAME! I HAVEN'T
CHANGED! B-BUT THE OPERATION? YOU
FIXED ME, DOCTOR GREY! THAT'S WHY
YOU WORKED ON MY FACE SO OFTEN!
AND ALL THE WHILE YOU TOLD ME YOU
WERE JUST FIXING THE DRESSINGS!

THE DRAMA CAME TO A CLOSE... ONLY ONE
REMAINED ON THE STAGE... A SOBBING,
SHUDDERING CHARACTER WHO PLAYED
HIS PART LIKE FIEND AND FOOL... WHO
PLACED DESIRE ABOVE REASON, AND
WICKEDNESS ABOVE MERCY, BUT WHOSE
PLOT WAS SHATTERED TO PIECES LIKE
THE FRAGMENTS OF THE BROKEN MIRROR...

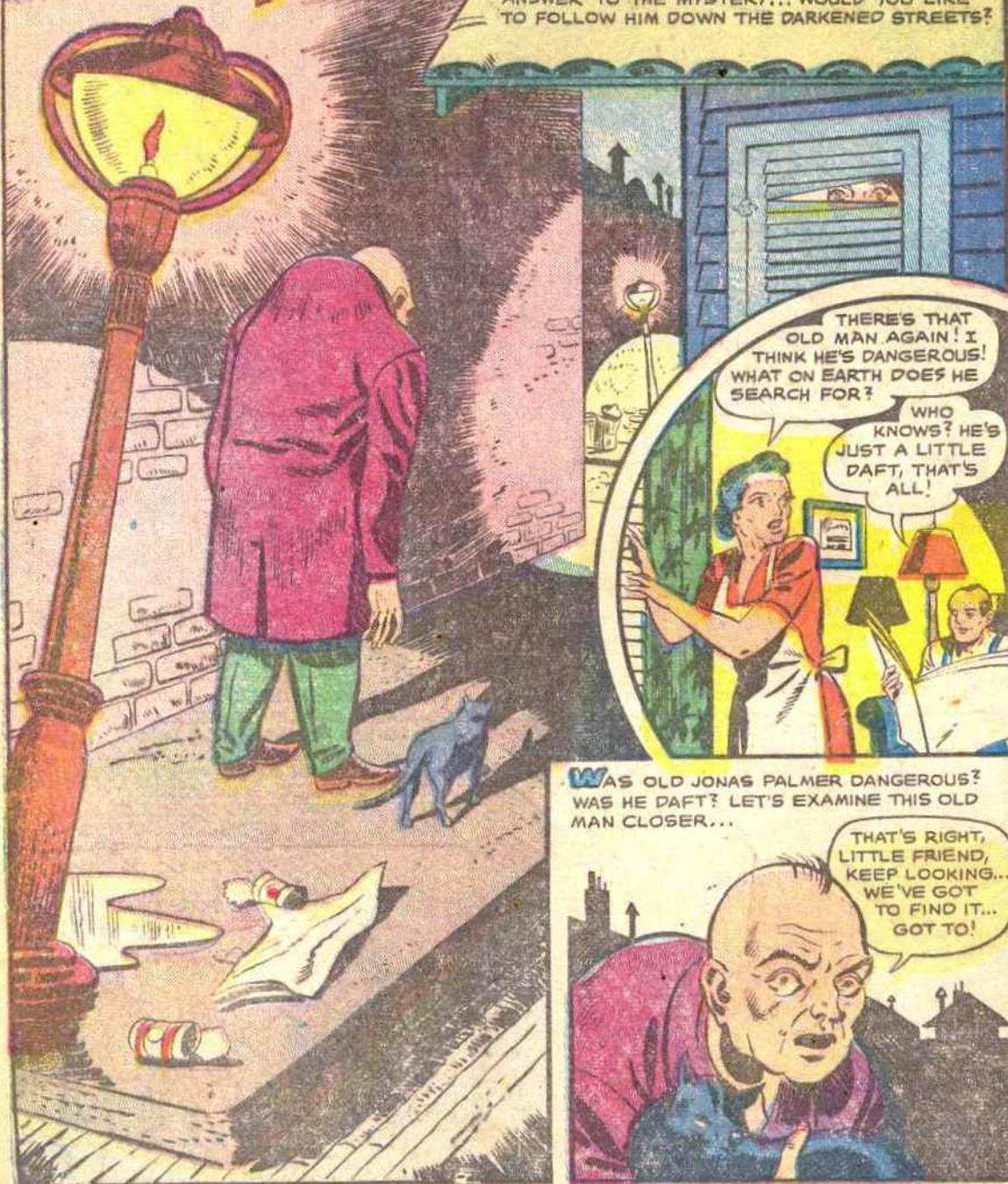


LET'S GO, DARLING!
WE'RE BOTH GOING
TO FORGET ABOUT
THIS PLACE!

The End

MIDNIGHT PROWLER

EACH NIGHT HE MADE HIS WAY THROUGH THE SHADOWS... WHAT WAS HIS GHOSTLY MISSION? HIS LITTLE JADE-EYED COMPANION KNEW THE ANSWER TO THE MYSTERY... WOULD YOU LIKE TO FOLLOW HIM DOWN THE DARKENED STREETS?



BUT LET US START OLD JONAS' STORY AT THE BEGINNING... ONE TIME HE OWNED AN ANTIQUE SHOP...

I'M SORRY, BUT THE WINE CHEST IS NOT FOR SALE, MAM...

WHAT A PITY! YOU'RE SURE?

QUITE SURE, MRS. PETERS, IT IS ONE OF THE FEW PIECES I KEEP FOR MYSELF. GOOD DAY.

ALL RIGHT, BUT REMEMBER, I'D GIVE ANYTHING TO OWN IT!



MRS. PETERS SILENTLY ENTERED THROUGH A BASEMENT WINDOW, LITTLE REALIZING TWO OTHERS WERE ALSO ABOUT TO ENTER WITH THE INTENTIONS OF LOOTING OLD JONAS PALMER...

THIS IS ALMOST TOO SIMPLE! BUT IT'S PLENTY PARK IN THERE! DON'T FALL OVER ANYTHING!



WHAT'S WRONG, SATAN? WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO TELL ME, EH? WHAT WAS THAT? NOISES IN MY SHOP?



WE CAN'T AFFORD TO HAVE ANY PROWLERS AROUND WHERE OUR RUBY IS... BETTER SEE WHAT CAUSED THAT NOISE!



IN THE SHADOWY BLACKNESS, THE THIEVING PAIR PAUSE WITH THE AWARENESS OF ANOTHER'S PRESENCE...



SOMEONE'S MOVING AROUND DOWN HERE. DO YOU THINK IT'S THE OLD MAN?



SHOT! SOMEONE SHOT ME! I-I'M DYING...



SILENTLY MRS. PETERS' BODY SLUMPED AGAINST THE CHEST SHE HAD SO COVETED, AND ITS WEIGHT SWUNG OPEN THE LARGEST TRICK DOOR... GROTESQUELY SHE TUMBLED IN AND THE DOOR QUICKLY SHUT...



JONAS CLICKED A LIGHT SWITCH AND STOOD FACING THE SMOKING GUN... HE HEARD THE THREATENING WORDS, BUT ABOVE THOSE SNARLING VOICES, ANOTHER SOUND REMAINED CRYSTAL CLEAR IN HIS BRAIN... THAT SNAP OF THE SECRET DOOR...



DON'T MAKE A SOUND, POP, OR WE'LL SILENCE YOU PERMANENTLY! OPEN THAT CHEST AND HAND OVER THE BEACON RUBY, PAL, THEN YOU WON'T GET HURT!



DON'T SHOOT ME, GENTLEMEN! I — I CAN'T OPEN THE CHEST. I SOLD IT TO MRS. PETERS! THE KEY IS IN HER POSSESSION... I WAS TO RETRIEVE MY JEWEL WHEN I DELIVERED THE CHEST TO HER!



I KNOW THAT SOUNDS LIKE A STRANGE ARRANGEMENT, BUT IT WAS MY GUARANTEE TO HER THAT THE CHEST WOULD TRULY BE SOLD TO HER!

WHERE DOES THIS DAME LIVE, POP? WE'RE GOING VISITING!



WE'LL DELIVER THE CHEST FOR YOU... THEN SHE CAN OPEN IT! COME ON... MOVE!

HER ADDRESS... I MUST LOOK IT UP!

JONAS WAS GAMBLING... HE KNEW A BODY WAS IN THE CHEST... IF HE GUESSED CORRECTLY, IT WAS MRS. PETERS... IF HE WAS WRONG, HE WAS AT LEAST LEADING THE THIEVES TO WHERE HE WOULD RECEIVE HELP.

HAVING THAT TRUCK WITH US WAS JUST PLAIN LUCK!

PLEASE BE CAREFUL, IT'S A PRICELESS CHEST...



FACING NERVOUSLY BACK AND FORTH BEFORE HIS MASTER'S SHOP OF ANTIQUES, SATAN WATCHES THE TRUCK WITH ITS GRIM SECRET, VANISH FROM SIGHT...



MR. PETERS
QUICKLY
OPENED
THE DOOR TO
ADMIT THE
STRANGE
VISITORS...
HIS EYES
WORE THE
ANXIOUS
LOOK OF
ONE WHO IS
WAITING...
JONAS
FELT A
CHILL FOR
THE SHOCK
AWAITING
THIS MAN...



UNTIL HE
SATISFIED
THE POLICE
WITH AN
EXPLANATION
OF HIS
PART IN THE
GRIM
MURDER,
JONAS WAS
HELD AT
THE POLICE
STATION...
BUT
FINALLY
HE WAS
FREED...



GRIM WEDDING DAY

By John Martin

GRANT STEEDHOLM shivered as he stood with Parks in the big old barn down at the end of Summer's Lane. Old and dry, the constable watched him and chuckled thinly.

"Yes, there's more than men to be afraid of, Mr. Steedholm." He glanced down at the silent remains of Steedholm's old house-keeper, Jinny Franks.

More than men to be afraid of, Steedholm thought to himself. What could that mean? He knew what it had to mean. The superstitious country folk were ready to attribute Jinny's mysterious death to goblins or evil spirits. The valley was full of superstition, although up to now it hadn't mattered to him. But even he had wondered...

He glanced again at Jinny, and her dark, evil face was composed. Only he knew what evil really lay behind the mask. It had been a perfect mask for Jinny. The country folk, simple and yet deeply wise, were not fools enough to assume a woman was bad just because she looked that way. And so, Steedholm reflected, they had shown themselves even greater fools by ignoring nature's plainest warning signals. Yes, Jinny was evil, almost as evil as he was himself. Steedholm, shaken though he was, laughed inwardly. He, himself, looked like a gentle country squire. And that was another mask. Behind it lay the perfectly sincere desire to be one and also the will to use evil to stay one.

"What I can't understand is why there isn't a mark on her," he said to Parks.

"Why, that's the best proof that the dark powers get her, Mr. Steedholm. Oh, you folks from the city can laugh at us and say we're just gullible, but there's a power none of you know of what goes on in the air right around you—and particularly at night. Evil, Mr. Steedholm, evil. Jinny wasn't much, but they got her. They'd get us all if we didn't watch out."

"You mean a coroner's jury will literally accept a story like that?" he asked, amazed.

Parks smiled slowly. "Oh, no. They'll put down to the usual person or persons unknown and inside, like me, they'll know who did it. But look, Mr. Steedholm, what else would they think? She's dead. Without a mark on her. We even know what killed her. Doc Spetter says it was simple heart failure. But we also know that terror killed her. Why else was she found atop the haystack outside?"

STEEDHOLM considered. That, he knew, was the really inexplicable part of the

whole business. No human agency, not even Jinny herself, could have lifted her body to the top of a rather high, but otherwise very ordinary, haystack, and left her dead. And there wasn't a sign of her having climbed there herself. Not a straw disturbed. For yards around the ground was perfectly clean.

Why, why, he asked himself, and could find no answer. His own estate—the one he'd inherited from his dead wife—was hundreds of feet away. How came Jinny to be found dead in such a manner outside the house she had taken care of for him?

He moved aside as the men from the village funeral parlor came in and took Jinny away. He regretted seeing her go. Last night had been the last time he'd seen her. It had been her habit to walk down toward the grave where his wife lay buried and glance down at it and chuckle deeply. And, presumably, she had done the same last night. Only she had never come back. Steedholm tried to imagine her strolling past the mound of earth with Dorothy's headstone at one end of it and overhead the great elms, forever a roof over dead memories. Yes, he regretted losing Jinny. It had been Jinny, after all, who had helped him lose Dorothy.

In deep thought, he absently thanked old Parks for his courtesy, and strolled out of old man Summer's barn and down toward his own land. The inquest would not trouble him. He could go on to marry Steena Talling now and forget the whole thing. What was a mystery like that to him, even if it had lost him a companion in what amounted to murder?

Amounted to murder. Abruptly, he paused and considered. Dorothy had died without a mark on her, either, but he knew what had killed her. His own and Jinny's unkindness, their calculated mental pressure that had finally exhausted her will to live. An invalid like Dorothy had little to begin with. And he had married her, hoping she would die soon. Later, he had realized that if he wanted to enjoy her fortune without hindrance, her death, in a measure, had to be hastened. And then had begun Dorothy's virtual captivity. Bereft of authority, badgered by her own husband and her own housekeeper, yet forced to hide what went on behind a false mask of good cheer, his wife's crippled spirit had given up quickly. And they had buried her as she wished to be buried, under the stand of elms, beside her father and her mother, to sleep forever as the last of a great old family.

THE SKY darkened a little as a wrack of clouds passed before the late evening sun. He turned in his own lane and came to a stop before Dorothy's grave. Yes, it was murder, he supposed, though no man on God's green earth could ever prove it. A grim, hard smile appeared on his face as he realized that with satisfaction, and then the fact of Jinny's death smote him with sudden force. What if the villagers were right, he thought. What if Dorothy herself had risen up out of her own grave to visit revenge on Jinny?

He paused in his stride. He was very close to the grave now. A chill breeze ran under the elms and, all of a sudden, his courage deserted him. He felt like a small boy walking past a cemetery at night, certain that close behind him horror trod, or, at the very least, lay in wait for him behind the nearest gravestone.

And, like a small boy, like any grown man, confronted with terror he did not understand and with murder on his conscience, Steedholm began to whistle. He thought it would keep up his courage.

He stopped when he came in sight of the grave. The cold sweat that had begun to roll down his forehead dried up. Grant Steedholm smiled in relief. He needed nothing to keep up his courage now, for the grave was undisturbed. Over the gentle, slow-rising mound, the green grass grew as it always had, and there were no tracks in the surrounding grounds.

Dorothy Steedholm, her husband knew now, lay at rest. He had nothing to fear from her departed, perturbed spirit. Whoever or whatever had killed poor Jinny, was of no concern to him. And now that he thought of it, Jinny had probably died at the hand of some unknown, bumpkin-lover who would, presently, be discovered red-handed killing some other girl. In fact, he was even happy Jinny had gone. Now there was no one in the world who knew what had happened to Dorothy, beside himself.

Now, he reflected, he could marry Steena Talling in perfect safety. Dorothy had left him money. And marrying into the Talling family would bring prestige. Squire Steedholm, he murmured to himself, master of ten thousand acres, husband of the village's most beautiful and desirable woman. The wedding had been set for that evening at eight, and now, with Jinny's inexplicable death out of his mind, he could go to it with an easy heart.

LEAVING Dorothy's grave, he returned to the old mansion that was now his, reported to the servants what had happened and proclaimed a decent period of mourning for Jinny and, chuckling secretly, went upstairs

to dress. From his window he could see the roof of the big Talling house, several thousand feet off. Ah, he thought, all the land between would tonight become his.

At seven, he finished his last glass of port, called for his coat and top-hat. In an exuberant mood, he decided to walk to the Talling house, past Dorothy's grave, down past the barn on Summer's Lane where they had put poor Jinny's body for a while and then onto the grassy lane lined with corn-flowers. They would be invisible now, he knew, for it was dark, but the smells of the growing things would be fragrant in his nostrils.

He left the house. Outside, the merest thread of light left by the setting sun ran like a line of blood along the horizon. Below him was the path under the elms, past the grave. Poor Dorothy, he thought, and smiled secretly. She would always be a fine memory now, a part of the mask that hid him from the world. She had been dead a year.

As he approached the grave, he lifted an arm in a final, ironical salute of farewell. Ahead of him the mound loomed mournful and dim, but he whispered: "Good-bye, my dear," and plunged ahead, whistling.

He stopped, suddenly, with a terrible jerk and screamed, as from above, a long ropey arm descended, lashing, seizing him in an iron, inexorable grip. Stark terror of the unknown ripped through him and his arms flailed out, coming to grips with what held him. What was it, he asked himself desperately—human being, wild beast or...

Then Grant Steedholm's blood froze as his fingers closed on the tangled mass that was crushing the life from him. Now he knew what had killed Jinny and what was killing him. Only one thing could strangle a woman and hurl her, senseless, aloft to fall ironically dead on a haystack. Only one thing could be remorselessly, revengefully killing him now. It was the elm that had stood beside the grave—and now its stiff muscles flexed in an ecstasy of hate and triumph. Its roots, he guessed, breaking into the coffin, had taken for their food all the hatred and desire for revenge that had gone into the grave with Dorothy Steedholm. And now that undying hatred, in full, blind cry, was crushing out its last drop of vengeance.

Above the headstone, Grant Steedholm rose suddenly into the air, a mass of twigs, like a giant's hand, strangling air from his body. He could not see beneath him as he was catapulted with frightful speed toward the night sky, but he knew that he would hit the ground with bone-crushing force. And, in his last, dim thoughts, he knew that when he hit he would be as dead as they die.

The WANDERING CORPSE

WAS THERE NO RESTING PLACE FOR THE ROAMING CADAVER? WHAT WAS THE PURPOSE OF HIS WEIRD JOURNEYS? DEAD MEN DO NOT TALK, BUT THIS MYSTERY ALMOST WENT UNSOLVED!



WEBSTER CHUMLY WAS DEAD ONLY A FEW HOURS, BUT HIS HOPEFUL RELATIVES LOST NO TIME GATHERING... THEIR GRIEF THINLY DISGUISED BENEATH THE ANTICIPATION OF HOW THE WEALTHY OLD ECCENTRIC WOULD DISTRIBUTE HIS LEGACY...



MEANWHILE, AT A BUSY CROSSTOWN CORNER...

YES, SIR! SORRY TO KEEP YOU WAITING, I WAS HAVING A SANDWICH... DIDN'T KNOW YOU GOT IN THE CAB...

WHERE TO, SIR? SAY... A-ARE YOU SICK? JUMPING TRAFFIC LIGHTS! THE GUY IS DEAD!



I TELL YOU THERE'S A DEAD FARE IN MY CAB! COME AND LOOK FOR YOURSELF!

I THINK WE'D BETTER! YOU'RE PARKED OUTSIDE, EH? — LET'S GO!



A SHORT TIME LATER, ANOTHER THREAD OF THE STRANGE STORY BEGAN TO WEAVE ITSELF INTO THE ADVENTURE OF THE WANDERING CORPSE... A BREATHLESS YOUNG GIRL RACED TO CATCH A MOVING TRAIN...

OH... WAIT! STOP!

MISSED IT! NOW I'LL LOSE HOURS OF TIME! WHAT LUCK!



... WHILE ABOARD
THAT VERY TRAIN...

GOING TO HOPESVILLE, EH?
THESE SLEEPING PASSENGERS
GIVE ME A PAIN! EXPECT A
CONDUCTER TO BE THEIR
PRIVATE ALARM CLOCK!

... AN
HOUR
LATER...

THAT'S STRANGE! BILL
TOLD ME TO WAKE THAT
MAN AT HOPESVILLE, AND
HE'S GONE! MUST
HAVE GOT OFF AT
THE WRONG
STATION!

... BUT ON A
LONELY COUNTRY
ROAD AN
APPOINTMENT
MADE BY
TELEPHONE
WAS BEING
KEPT...

I SEE YOU FOUND MY
WAGON OKAY, STRANGER!
I STOPPED IN TO CHAT
WITH A NEIGHBOR WHILE
I WAS WAITING
FOR YOU...

THINKIN' OF LIVIN' IN THESE
PARTS? YOU MIGHT NOT
LIKE IT... QUIET AS A
CEMETERY! GOOD FARM
LANDS THOUGH...

SAY, YOU'RE MIGHTY QUIET...
YI!!! IT'S A DEAD MAN! AN'
ME SITTIN' HERE TALKIN'
AWAY TO HIM!

DEAD! I—I'LL
GIT THE SHERIFF!
HELP! HELP!



BUT
THE SHERIFF
NEVER DID
GET TO SEE
THE DEAD-MAN,
FOR AGAIN HE
MYSTERIOUSLY
DISAPPEARED...
BUT WHEN A
STEAMER
BOUND FOR
'CUBA WAS
ONLY ONE
HOUR OUT OF
PORT, A
FAMILIAR
FIGURE WAS
PROPPED UP
ON ONE OF
THE DECK
CHAIRS...





...AND THIS
THE SAME
YOUNG
LADY WHO
EARLIER
HAD
MISSSED
HER TRAIN,
MANAGED
TO CATCH
A SHIP
THAT WAS
TO SAIL
HIGH
ADVENTURE!



LATER, AS
THE SILENCE
OF NIGHT
SETTLED
OVER THE
SHIP...

I CAN'T WASTE
ANY MORE TIME
IN HERE! BUT
THIS TIME I'D
BETTER CARRY
MY GUN!



IT WOULD SEEM THAT WEBSTER CHUMLY WAS NOT YET TO REST IN PEACE! HIS CORPSE WAS STRETCHED OUT ON A TABLE MILES AWAY FROM THE PLACE WHERE HE BREATHED HIS LAST... BUT WHAT WAS TO HAPPEN NOW?



THE LATE MR. CHUMLY HIRED ME FOR JUST THIS PURPOSE! HE WONDERED WHICH OF HIS KIN WOULD TRY TO GET AT HIS FORTUNE... IN FACT, HE ALMOST SUSPECTED IT WOULD BE YOU!



GYPSY'S CURSE

BREWED IN A CAULDRON OF BITTER REVENGE AND FLAVORED WITH THE VENOM OF BLACK RANCOR, IS A ROMANY CURSE! WOE BE TO HIM WHO SHALL BE ITS VICTIM, FOR AS WITH DEATH, THERE CAN BE NO ESCAPE FROM ITS FULL MEASURE!

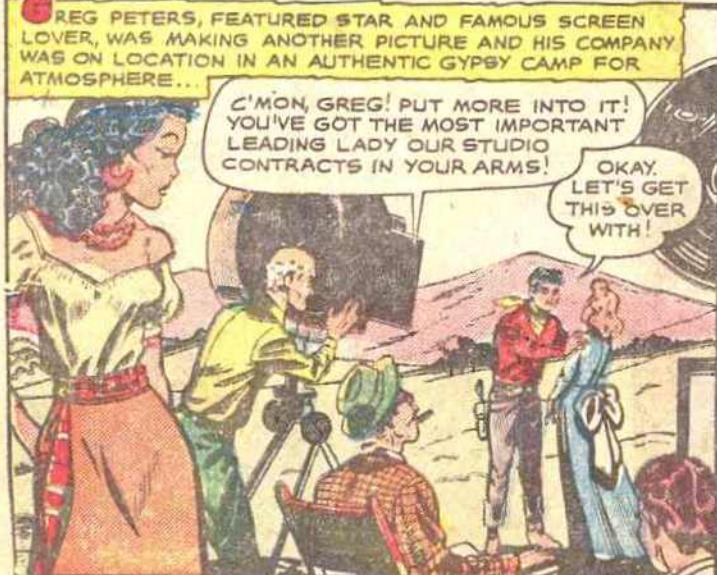


GREG PETERS, FEATURED STAR AND FAMOUS SCREEN LOVER, WAS MAKING ANOTHER PICTURE AND HIS COMPANY WAS ON LOCATION IN AN AUTHENTIC GYPSY CAMP FOR ATMOSPHERE...

C'MON, GREG! PUT MORE INTO IT! YOU'VE GOT THE MOST IMPORTANT LEADING LADY OUR STUDIO CONTRACTS IN YOUR ARMS!

OKAY.
LET'S GET
THIS OVER
WITH!

I'LL BE WITH YOU IN A FEW MINUTES, BABY!
YOU JUST STAND BY!
I DON'T KNOW IF I ENJOY WATCHING YOU KISS THAT GIRL, GREG...



6 GREG PETERS WAS WHILING AWAY HIS TIME, BUT THE LOOK IN LUCIA'S EYES WAS DEEP AND COMPELLING. SOMEHOW SHE MANAGED TO PUT HIM AT A LOSS FOR WORDS... IT WAS LIKE TOYING WITH FIRE...

YOU'RE QUIET TONIGHT, LITTLE ONE...

MY THOUGHTS ARE OF THE FUTURE, GREG...

MY FATHER ALREADY STARTS THE ARRANGEMENTS FOR OUR MARRIAGE, YET YOU HAVEN'T SPKEN OF IT TO ME...



MARRIAGE! WHAT ON EARTH PUT SUCH AN IDEA IN YOUR HEAD?

IDEA! IS LOVE AN IDEA TO YOU? HAVE THESE WEEKS TOGETHER BEEN A GAME TO YOU?

NOW DON'T SPOIL EVERYTHING! HAVEN'T YOU ENJOYED OUR FRIENDSHIP, TOO?

FRIENDSHIP! YOU HAVE DEFAMED MY HEART!



SO YOU HEARD HER! WELL, DON'T ASK ME WHERE YOUR DAUGHTER GOT THOSE NOTIONS OF MARRIAGE!

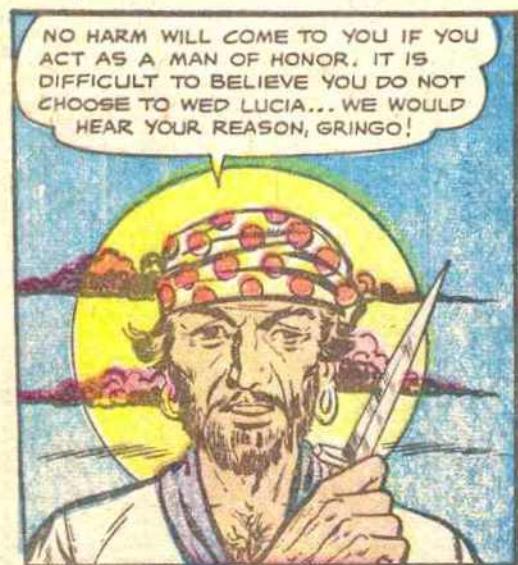
I HEARD NOTHING, BUT LUCIA WILL SOON DRY HER TEARS AND TELL ME WHAT I SHOULD KNOW, PETERS.

INSTINCT WARNED GREG PETERS HE WAS DEALING WITH A PROBLEM THAT COULD PROVE TROUBLESOME. WITHOUT FURTHER ADD., HE MADE A REASONABLE SUGGESTION TO JOE WILSON, FRIEND AND DIRECTOR OF HIS LATEST FILM...

LET'S GET BACK TO HOLLYWOOD, JOE! THAT LITTLE GYPSY GAL IS GETTING IN MY HAIR!

HEARTLESS BEAST! ALL THAT MATTERS TO GREG PETERS IS GREG PETERS!



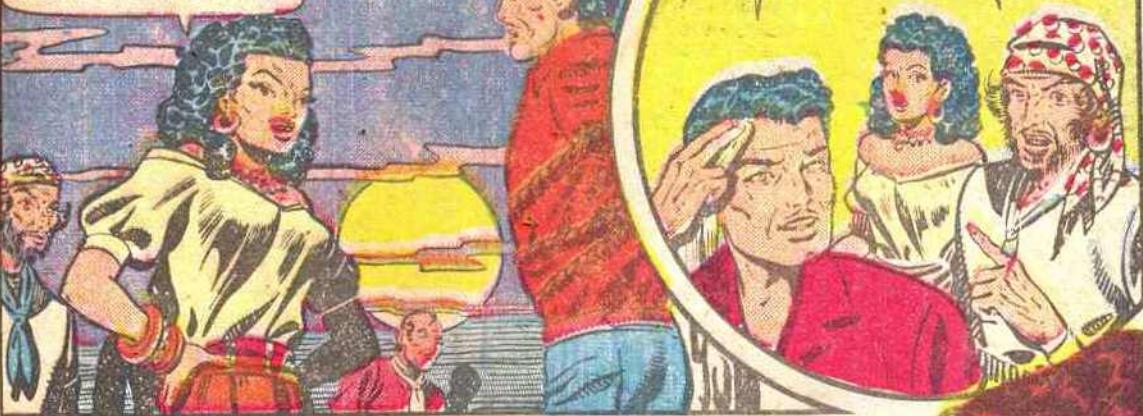


I RELEASE YOU AND SO WILL MY PEOPLE... BUT I CURSE YOU, GREG PETERS! NO WOMAN WHO LOVES YOU SHALL AVOID DEATH, AND YOU SHALL KNOW ENDLESS MISERY IN YOUR HEART!

NOW WILL YOU UNTIE ME?

WELL, SO LONG... SORRY WE COULDN'T PART AS FRIENDS...

YOU WILL REMEMBER THIS NIGHT THE REST OF YOUR LIFE, PETERS.



HOPE! HOW COME YOU'RE NOT PACKING WITH THE OTHERS?

I WAS LOOKING FOR YOU, GREG! I MUST SAY YOU SURE SPENT ENOUGH TIME WITH THOSE GYPSIES!

LOOK, SWEETIE, I'VE GOT A LOT TO DO, AND NO TIME TO CHIT-CHAT WITH YOU!

POLITE, AREN'T YOU?



GETTING BACK TO HOLLYWOOD WAS LIKE RETURNING TO CIVILIZATION... IN NO TIME THE PICTURE WAS FINISHED AND TRANQUILLITY SETTLED OVER GREG PETERS' LIFE... THE GYPSY'S CURSE SEEMED A THING OF THE PAST...

WILSON, WHAT'S NEXT ON OUR PROGRAM? MAKE IT GOOD NOW...

GREG, I'D LIKE TO SEE YOU MARRY HOPE CALDWELL. THAT GIRL IS MADLY IN LOVE WITH YOU!



I CAN'T STAND THE GIRL, OLD MAN. LUCKY FOR HER, TOO, ACCORDING TO WHAT THAT LITTLE GYPSY TOLD ME! NOW WHAT ELSE CAN YOU THINK OF?

WHAT!



SILENCE
CHARGED WITH
ELECTRICITY
SETTLED OVER
THE TRIO AS
HOPE CALDWELL
STEPPED INTO
VIEW... IT WAS
OBVIOUS
THAT SHE HAD
OVERHEARD
GREG'S
DENOUNCEMENT.
HER SMALL
FACE WAS
WHITE AND
HER VOICE
SHOOK WHEN
SHE SPOKE...



I'LL LOVE
YOU TILL I
DIE, GREG...
OR UNTIL
YOU DO!

THAT'LL BE A
FULL TIME JOB... I
HAVE INTENTIONS
OF BEING AROUND
A LONG TIME!



BUT HOPE CALDWELL WAS WRONG... GREG ESCAPED DEATH BY A SMALL MARGIN, THANKS TO THE QUICK THINKING OF HIS FRIEND FREDIE JOE WILSON, WHO PROMPTLY TELEPHONED FOR AN AMBULANCE... THEN, LATER...

IF YOU PRESS CHARGES, GREG, THAT LAST PICTURE WILL HAVE TO BE JUNKED. IT WOULD COST US ALL A FORTUNE IN MONEY AND BAD PUBLICITY!

HAVE THE POLICE GOT HER?

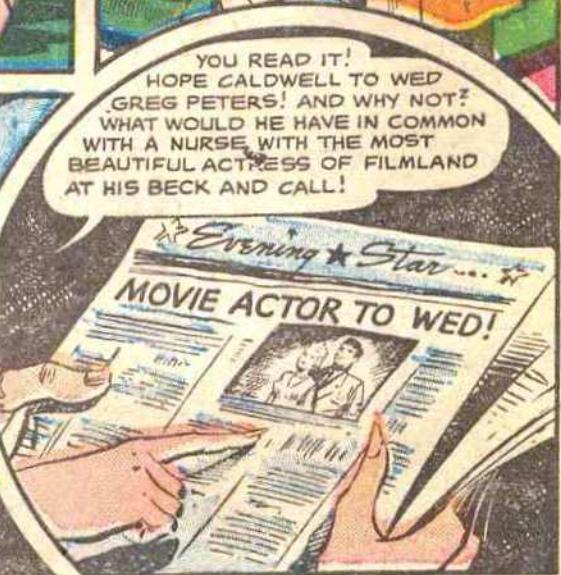
I GUESS YOU'RE RIGHT, WILSON. I'LL HAVE TO FORGET IT... THAT LITTLE DEVIL!

FORGET HER! YOU'LL SOON BE OUT OF HERE, TOO. I ARRANGED FOR YOU TO HAVE THE BEST CARE...



LOVE CAME QUICKLY TO GREG PETERS... THE WARMTH OF IT FILLED HIS MIND AND HEALED HIS WOUNDED BODY... BEFORE MANY DAYS HAD PASSED HE COULD NO LONGER KEEP IT A SECRET...





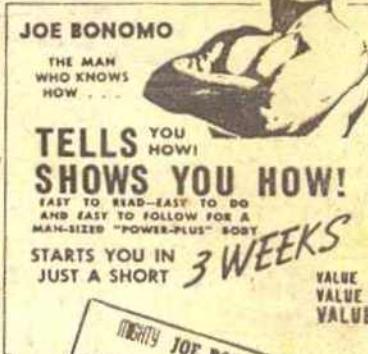
HOPES WAS ENTERTAINING GUESTS, BUT SHE INVITED HER VISITORS INTO A MORE PRIVATE ROOM. HER EYES WERE MOCKING IN SPITE OF HER FEIGNED SURPRISE AT THE NEWSPAPER REPORT...



GREG DIDN'T EVEN LOOK AT THE WEAPON HE CLUTCHED FOR... RAGE SEETHED WITHIN HIM BLOTTING OUT ALL JUDGMENT...



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